

Testimony of Curtiss Kolodney
In Opposition to
Proposed Bill HB 5142 & HB 5259

AN ACT REQUIRING PUBLIC HEARINGS ON THE LOCATION OF GROUP HOMES.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on a matter of the greatest public importance. My name is Curtiss Kolodney. I am the Recovery Housing Manager at the Connecticut Community for Addiction Recovery. CCAR has over ten years experience as advocates for the recovery community in Connecticut. My primary responsibility is to support the Recovery Housing Coalition of Connecticut. The Recovery Housing Coalition of Connecticut was established in October 2004. We have established minimum standards for operating a recovery house. We provide technical assistance to new and current owners of recovery houses and are a forum for recovery housing issues. The Recovery Housing Coalition continues to grow and continues to "raise the standard" in regard to Recovery Houses – creating and maintaining housing that will offer recoveree's a safe environment that will help them succeed in their recovery journey.

My experience has convinced me that living in a sober house is one of the most effective ways to help people who are struggling with alcohol and drugs. The fact that everyone in the house is also struggling to remain sober is of incalculable benefit. The most important fact about sobriety is that the longer a person is connected to care, the more likely is his or her continued ability to avoid relapse. Sober houses are not treatment centers. They provide a sober living environment, encourage treatment and attendance at 12 step meetings and require random drug tests to make sure everyone is continuing in sobriety.

It was in recognition of the success of the sober house environment that led Congress to pass the 1988 amendments to the Americans with Disabilities Act that provides legal protections to efforts by individuals in recovery to live together as a family in order to protect their sobriety. The federal courts have consistently held, following the U.S. Supreme Court decision in the Edmonds case, that local laws that burden sober houses more than other family living situations may not be enforced. Frankly, although these two bills have not yet been fully drafted, it is hard to avoid a concern that it may pass over the line established by Congress. It appears to create some sort of impediment that is completely alien to any notion of individuals living in a family environment.

Please do not put in place a statute that may well jeopardize access to housing for persons striving to recover their lives and become productive members of society. Please consider working with the Recovery Housing Coalition of Connecticut and the recovery community to accommodate community needs. Thank you.